

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

March 7, 2016

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

Present: Arland Rasmussen, Ken Pawluk, Chad Peterson, Rick Steen, Brian Hagen, Mary Scherling

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Diane Jorgenson, Economic Assistance Supervisor;
Sarah Heinle, Auditor's Department; Michael Montplaisir, County Auditor

I. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Scherling made a motion to approve the February 1, 2016 Board minutes. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Economic Assistance Caseload Update

Mr. Ammerman stated his intent of the Caseload Update presentation was to provide the Board with the most accurate account of the caseloads Economic Assistance Division is working with. This is the first time in approximately three years that these numbers have been able to be identified. At that time, the average caseload per worker was 190-200 cases with a standard caseload being identified as 180-185. Since that time, there has been the addition of the Affordable Care Act cases which have increased the worker's caseloads.

Mr. Ammerman referenced the graphs located in the packet provided to the Board. He explained Economic Assistance currently has 54 Eligibility Workers working cases. If all cases were equally distributed among all EW positions, each generic worker would have 495 cases. In reality, the majority of the current EW's have 600-650 cases because of covering for new Eligibility Workers who are in training and just beginning to take cases. The second graph indicated the weighted factors for each program within the units listed in the first graph. The third graph reflected an equally distributed caseload when weighted. These numbers indicated the need for an additional seven staff each in the Generic and Aged/Disabled Units.

Ms. Scherling questioned the reason for new Eligibility Workers not having a full caseload until they have been here for one year. It was stated new workers do start receiving cases within the first few months of being with the agency. At six months, the expectation is they are carrying approximately one half the regular caseload. Within 12 months a new worker would be at the expected caseload standard. It was stated that it takes up to 18 months for a staff person to feel fully competent with the computer systems and the eligibility process; even then, there are constant updates, new programs and systems that staff need to keep up-to-date on.

Mr. Peterson asked if the need was that high for additional staff, how it was possible the existing work was still getting done. Mr. Ammerman stated the Economic Assistance staff have not been able to meet the required timelines that are established by policy. Ms. Heinle reported \$12,000 in overtime has already been used during January and February, 2016. Mr. Ammerman stated that the Agency can be sanctioned for not meeting the timelines set by federal and state policies.

III. NDDHS Budget Cuts – Potential Impact on County

An overall budget cut from State is resulting in approximately \$500,000 loss to Cass County Social Services. The biggest impact would be to the Adult Protective Services (APS), accounting for \$245,000 of the deficit which was to be fully funded through June, 2017 by the State. Due to the cuts, APS will lose their funding for the second half of the biennium. Mr. Ammerman explained APS has been an established program for 25 years and is an legally mandated service for the NDDHS to provide based on legislation that occurred during the 2015 Legislature, however this service in the past been primarily funded by the county funds, and \$90,000 from a Federal grant. The Cass County APS services provide services to Region V. There are currently three APS workers in Cass County Social Services that could potentially lose their positions because of these cuts. Most other North Dakota Regions have APS through the Human Service Center, however, Southeast Human Service Center does not offer these services because Social Services does. Mountrail County is fully funded by the State to provide APS services for Region I and II, and a private agency if fully funded by the State to provide APS services in Region VI.

Mr. Ammerman asked the board for further discussion on this topic and for the Board's guidance moving forward. Mr. Ammerman will also have further conversation with the State with a decision being made before June, 2016 as to how APS will proceed.


IV. Operations Report

Mr. Ammerman reported Family Services has seen a tremendous increase in Child Protection Reports, as well as the number of children placed in foster care. One year ago, there were 175 children in foster care; currently there are 241 children in placement. One reason for this is the increased amount of new people in the community with limited extended family, as well as an increase in drugs and trafficking. Most individuals who are involved with this type of activity are less likely to engage in services and/or treatment.

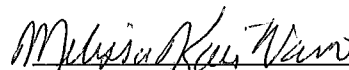
Mr. Ammerman briefly stated the implementation of the SPACES program in Economic Assistance is not going well. SPACES determines a person's medical assistance eligibility. There are constant changes and updates causing the process to take two to three times longer than before. Due to these issues, it has caused a backup in applications.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Pawluk made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:14 pm. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Motion carried.



Arland Rasmussen, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder